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Cultural Building Task Force Findings and Recommendations

*Prepared for the 123rd Maine Legislature
Pursuant to Resolve 2005, Chapter 168*

January 15, 2007



*Prepared by the Department of the Secretary of State
Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap*

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In March of 2006, the 122nd Maine Legislature approved L.D. 2082, calling for a study of the needs for Maine's Cultural Building.

The reasoning behind the initiative was direct:

"...The Maine State Cultural Building is experiencing a severe shortage of archive space and physical building damage that could lead to the loss of cultural artifacts, books and archived records...and in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency...and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety...."

The Legislature charged the Secretary of State to lead a Task Force "to develop a plan for the Maine State Cultural Building."

As part of its duties, the Task Force was instructed to examine and make recommendations regarding:

1. Space limitations, mechanical problems, energy inefficiencies and physical deterioration;
2. The possibility of constructing a new building;
3. Obtaining federal sources of funds to be used for upgrading and expanding cultural facilities in Augusta;
4. Obtaining private sources of funds to be used for upgrading and expanding cultural facilities in Augusta; and,
5. Ways for the State to work with universities to develop cooperative agreements to meet the cultural needs of the State.

The Legislature also required that any Task Force "recommendations for building and grounds improvements must be consistent with the Capitol Planning Commission master plan and rules."

Responding to the legislative charge, the Task Force concluded that federal funds are not available to meet this purpose (Item 3), and that any private funding would be extremely limited (Item 4).

Additionally, the Task Force believes that the State and its universities currently collaborate on meeting Maine's cultural needs (Item 5).

The recommendations that follow address Items 1 and 2.

HISTORY

The 103rd Maine Legislature gave birth to the Cultural Building in asking voters to approve a \$4.3 million bond issue to construct a single building to house three agencies, the State Archives, State Museum, and State Library. Following bond issue approval, the State availed itself to an additional \$500,000 in federal funding to defray construction costs.

The rationale behind uniting the agencies centered on the shared but distinct missions of protecting and presenting the history and heritage of Maine through its public documents, artifacts, records and books. Until that time, no comprehensive State Museum existed, and the archive function was scattered about southern Kennebec County.

ITEM ONE

Opened in 1971, the Cultural Building was soon forced to seek alternative storage space because the existing building was already too small to accommodate the collection demand. Off site storage continues for all three resident agencies.

Inadequate space is one part of the problem. Additionally, the Building's construction occurred before energy and environmental sensitivities arose. As a result, the Building is a year-round energy drain because it lacks insulation. Moreover, it remains an environmental challenge to all collections because no vapor barrier/lock exists to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Furthermore, since its construction, the Cultural Building has undergone numerous and extensive repairs and replacements, such as asbestos abatement, that have required agency closures. Within the last six years, the Bureau of General Services completed more than \$2.2 million in repair/replacement projects. More projects are pending, but none that address the need for building insulation or the introduction of a vapor lock.

Two architectural assessments within the past five years estimate that merely bringing the Building up to construction code will cost in excess of \$35 million.

Of equal import, the resident agencies are constrained, by insufficient or inadequate space, from meeting their service expectations to the State and the public.

ITEM TWO

Accordingly, the Task Force developed a list of alternatives regarding how best to meet its charge.

- Option 1: Do nothing
- Option 2: Renovate the Cultural Building
- Option 3: Renovate and expand the Cultural Building
- Option 4: Raze the Cultural Building; construct anew on site
- Option 5: Construct new on extended Capitol Campus
- Option 6: Construct new on existing Capitol Campus

The Task Force also briefly discussed dividing the current resident agencies. This idea was rejected because it departs from the original intent of the Legislature, is contrary to the agencies' wishes, and would further inconvenience the public.

As implied in the enabling legislation, the two-fold difficulties of the Cultural Building – space and condition – are formidable in any structure, but are even more so when the missions of the building residents are vital and, in many respects, priceless.

Against the backdrop of evident needs, the Task Force unanimously rejected Option 1, to do nothing about the Building.

Similarly, the Task Force rejected Option 2, to renovate the building, because it would not answer the need for additional space.

Upon examining the expense and inconvenience associated with razing the Building and constructing a new facility on the same site, the Task Force rejected Option 4.

In rejecting Options 1, 2, and 4, the Task Force expresses its full agreement that the State consider new construction, either by renovating and expanding the current Building, or by constructing a new facility. This conclusion, however, warrants further analysis before committing to one or the other option.

Of the two remaining options, the Task Force split. Some members prefer Option 3, Renovation and Expansion. The Task Force recommends a more thorough and comprehensive consideration of this option than was incorporated in the 2001 Harriman Report. Parking and access will be critical issues, and Option 3, like Option 6, will need to be phased in to conserve resources, especially involving the "swing space" issues of moving and temporary storage costs. All of the

explored options are expensive, but Option 3 is the less costly of the two preferred options.

Option 6 also received significant support. Execution of Option 6 would be best carried out by freeing up Campus space by relocating the Department of Transportation Fleet Services Center away from Capitol Street, possibly relocating the Maine State Retirement System, and constructing terraced parking adjacent to Capitol Street for some 750+ vehicles. This option presents the opportunity for establishing a Maine government visitor's center and constructing a new Cultural Center (Library, Museum, Archives, Film and Arts) in Parking Lot F, west of the Cross State Office Building. Both of these steps could be done in phases. The current Cultural Building could then be renovated and re-used, with some possibilities identified in this report.

Phase I of Option 6, relocating Fleet Services, can be carried out regardless of the selection of any option, and would benefit the public and the Campus. The following recommendations are presented to inform the continuance of this process:

RECOMMENDATION ONE

The Task Force recommends that a comprehensive consideration be funded and conducted and that a design study to renovate and expand or to replace the Cultural Building be developed for Legislative and Executive review.

Maine's investment in a state-of-the-art Cultural Building would be timely in view of findings in the 2006 *Brookings Report*. The Report refers to Maine's quality-of-place as the state's most significant asset.

The State's cultural agencies attempt to teach, lead and model the preservation and cultural advancement initiatives that embody Maine's quality-of-place. Limitations of the current Building, however, make many important services and activities nearly impossible.

With consensus support to renovate and expand the existing Building or to build a new facility, the Task Force approaches the 123rd Legislature with a related series of recommendations.

Assessing the plight of the Building, the Task Force discovered that the internal challenges of space and conditions were accompanied by another service need, a need that affects the entire Campus. The lack of convenient parking makes

access to the Cultural Building difficult. Any remedy of the needs of the Building requires addressing the issue of Campus parking and access.

The Task Force located a potential resource that could alleviate the parking/access challenge. Specifically, the Department of Transportation Fleet Services operation adjacent to Capitol Street occupies more than 12 acres of land that could be used to relieve campus congestion.

The Department has long desired to find a site more suitable for fleet services, and the State Facilities Master Plan of 2001, adopted by the 120th Maine Legislature, identifies the present use of the acreage to be of low value for the location.

Recognizing that providing additional space for a Cultural Building will consume existing parking space, the Task Force encourages considering the relocation of Fleet Services as a key first step to improving long-term Campus access and utility.

Addressing the Fleet Services area first would ensure that sufficient parking is available during the subsequent phases of any Cultural Building initiative. Furthermore, the Fleet Services site has been judged to be environmentally clean, which would accommodate a rapid and reasonably priced re-use.

RECOMMENDATION TWO

The Task Force recommends that the Maine Department of Transportation's Fleet Services and related activities be removed from the Capitol Campus property adjacent to Capitol and Sewall Streets.

The Task Force concurs with the objectives of the State Facilities Master Plan to establish a pedestrian-exclusive area among Campus buildings. Improving safety on the Campus for employees and the public is a welcome by-product of this proposal.

The existing Cultural Building, while no longer adequate for the resident agencies, remains a Campus asset.

Accordingly, the Task Force broached the subject of possible cost-effective re-uses.

One possibility arose from a review of the 1989 Space Management Consultants' report to the 119th Maine Legislature on Planning and Programming for the new Supreme Judicial Court Building in Augusta.

It resolved that no property then available was suitable for use by Maine's Supreme Judicial Court. Thus Maine remains the only state where the three branches of government are not in a united capital location.

The Judiciary then was seeking an approximately 80,000 square-foot structure to house the Court and related offices.

The Cultural Building (161,000 sq. ft.) meets the spatial and geographic aims identified in the Space Management report.

Maine Supreme Judicial Court Chief Justice Leigh Saufley and Court Administrator Theodore Glessner toured the Cultural Building and deemed it suitable for renovation as a home for the Supreme Judicial Court and the Administrative Offices of the Court – with the likelihood of additional space being made available for legislative offices and hearing rooms.

RECOMMENDATION THREE

The Task Force recommends providing planning assistance to the Maine Judiciary to study the feasibility of housing the Maine Supreme Judicial Court and the Administrative Office of the Court on the Capitol Campus.

The Task Force recognizes that its range of recommendations goes beyond what might have been construed as its initial charge from the 122nd Maine Legislature. Rather than regret that expansion, however, the Task Force embraces it as a needed step in arriving at a remedy for the needs of the Cultural Building.

Respectfully submitted,

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Secretary of State

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